

Aromatic structure of Tyrosine-92 in the extrinsic PsbU protein of red algal Photosystem II is important for its functioning

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Abstract PsbU is one of the extrinsic proteins in red algal Photosystem II (PSII) and functions to optimize the availability of Ca^{2+} and Cl^- cofactors for water oxidation. To determine the functional residue of PsbU, we constructed various PsbU mutants from a red alga *Cyanidium caldarium* and reconstituted these mutants with the red algal PSII. The results revealed that Tyr-92 of PsbU, especially its aromatic ring, was essential for maintaining its function. From the crystal structure of PSII, Tyr-92 is located close to Pro-340 of D1, suggesting that the aromatic ring of Tyr-92 interacts with the CH group of Pro-340 of D1, and this CH/ π interaction is important for the optimal function of the Mn_4Ca -cluster.

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1. Introduction

Photosystem II (PSII) exists in thylakoid membranes from cyanobacteria to higher plants and catalyzes light-induced electron transfer leading to the water-splitting and oxygen evolution. PSII is consisted of around 20 subunits, among which there are 3–4 extrinsic proteins that function to maintain the stability and activity of the oxygen-evolving complex. PSII of cyanobacteria and most eukaryotic algae such as red algae, diatoms and brown algae contain three extrinsic proteins of 33 kDa (PsbO), cytochrome *c*550 (PsbV) and 12 kDa (PsbU), although green algal and *Euglena* PSIIs contain PsbP and PsbQ instead of PsbV and PsbU [1–5]. In addition, PSII purified from a red alga *Cyanidium caldarium* contained an additional extrinsic protein of 20 kDa encoded by the *psbQ'* gene which has a low homologue with the *psbQ* genes of green algae and higher plants [6,7]. Among these extrinsic proteins, PsbU was found to function in optimizing the availability of Ca^{2+} and Cl^- cofactors for water oxidation in PSII from the red alga *C. caldarium* [6,8]. The red algal PsbU is consisted of 93 amino acids with a molecular mass of 10513 Da [9]. To iden-

tify the functional domains of PsbU, we have prepared the PsbU proteins lacking several amino acid residues from the N-terminus and/or C-terminus by limited proteolysis and directed mutagenesis, and examined their binding and functional properties by reconstitution experiments. Our results indicated that two residues (Ile-91 and/or Tyr-92) from the lysine residue of the C-terminus of PsbU constituted an important domain for minimizing the Ca^{2+} and Cl^- requirement of oxygen evolution [8].

In order to identify which residue in the C-terminal domain is required for the function of PsbU, we deleted one or two residues from the C-terminus and reconstituted the mutant protein with red algal PSII retaining PsbO, PsbQ' and PsbV. Analysis of oxygen-evolving activities in the absence or presence of NaCl and CaCl_2 of the reconstituted PSII revealed that Tyr-92 was important for its functioning. To examine the role of Tyr-92 in more detail, we constructed a series of mutants by replacing Tyr-92 with various amino acids. These results indicated that the aromatic structure of Tyr-92 in PsbU was essential to maintain its functional structure. Based on the present results and the recent crystal structure of cyanobacterial PSII [10], the functional structure of PsbU in relation to its interaction with intrinsic proteins of PSII was discussed.

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Preparation of oxygen-evolving PSII from the red alga

Oxygen-evolving PSII complexes were prepared from an acidophilic and thermophilic red alga, *C. caldarium*, according to Enami et al. [2] with slight modifications. Thylakoid membranes isolated from *C. caldarium* cells were solubilized with 1.3% *n*-dodecyl- β -D-maltoside and then loaded onto a DEAE-Sepharose CL-6B column to purify the red algal PSII.

2.2. Expression and purification of various mutants of PsbU

Mutant proteins of PsbU either lacking one or two residues of the C-terminus, or with its Tyr-92 replaced by Thr, Phe, Asp, Arg, Ile, Gly, Trp, Pro or His were generated by the PCR method, expressed in the host cell BL21(DE3) and purified as described previously [8].

2.3. Reconstitution experiments

The red algal PSII was treated with 1 M CaCl_2 to remove all of the four extrinsic proteins. The CaCl_2 -treated PSII was incubated with various PsbU mutants, together with PsbO, PsbQ' and PsbV, for 30 min at 0 °C in the dark, as described previously [8]. The reconstituted PSII

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was centrifuged at $40000 \times g$ for 20 min after addition of 10% polyethylene glycol 6000. The precipitate was suspended in a medium of 25% glycerol and 50 mM MES–NaOH (pH 6.5) (buffer A), and the binding and functional properties of native and mutant PsbU were analyzed by SDS–PAGE and oxygen evolution measurement.

2.4. SDS–PAGE

Samples were solubilized with 5% lithium lauryl sulfate and 75 mM dithiothreitol. The solubilized samples were applied to an SDS–polyacrylamide gel containing a gradient of 16–22% polyacrylamide and 7.5 M urea.

2.5. Assay of oxygen evolution

Oxygen evolution was measured with a Clark-type oxygen electrode at 25 °C in buffer A with phenyl-*p*-benzoquinone as electron acceptor, in the absence or presence of 10 mM NaCl or 5 mM CaCl_2 .

3. Results

3.1. Tyr-92 is important for the functioning of PsbU in optimizing the availability of Ca^{2+} and Cl^- cofactors for water oxidation

As described previously [6,8], the four extrinsic proteins in red algal PSII were completely removed by treatment with 1 M CaCl_2 (lane 2 in Fig. 1). When the CaCl_2 -treated PSII was reconstituted with PsbO, PsbQ' and PsbV, these three extrinsic proteins rebound to the CaCl_2 -treated PSII (lane 3 in Fig. 1). Further reconstitution with native (lane 4) or mutant PsbU either lacking one (lane 5) or two residues (lane 6) of the C-terminus led to the complete binding of the native PsbU protein as well as its two mutants (Fig. 1), indicating that the binding abilities of PsbU are conserved in the two mutant proteins. This is consistent with our previous observation that even the removal of both of nine residues from the N-terminus and 10 residues from the C-terminus simultaneously by chymotrypsin treatment did not affect its stoichiometric binding to PSII [8].

In spite of complete rebinding of the two PsbU mutants, the recovery of oxygen evolution was largely different between the PsbU mutants lacking one or two residues from the C-terminus.

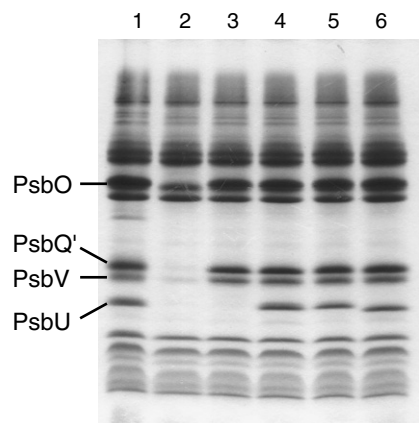


Fig. 1. Reconstitution of red algal PSII with various extrinsic proteins. Lane 1, control PSII; lane 2, CaCl_2 -treated PSII; lanes 3–6, CaCl_2 -treated PSII reconstituted with PsbO, PsbQ' and PsbV (lane 3), PsbO, PsbQ' and PsbV plus native PsbU (R1-K93) (lane 4), PsbO, PsbQ' and PsbV plus PsbU mutant lacking one residue from the C-terminus (R1-Y92) (lane 5), and PsbO, PsbQ' and PsbV plus PsbU mutant lacking two residues from the C-terminus (R1-I91) (lane 6).

As shown in Table 1, the native PSII of red alga showed oxygen-evolving activities of 3095, 3144 or 3190 $\mu\text{mol O}_2$ per mg Chl per h in the absence or presence of 10 mM NaCl or 5 mM CaCl_2 , respectively. When the four extrinsic proteins were removed by treatment with 1 M CaCl_2 , the activity was almost completely lost. By reconstitution of the CaCl_2 -treated PSII with PsbO, PsbQ' and PsbV, the oxygen-evolving activity recovered to 3%, 36% or 49% of that of untreated PSII, respectively, in the absence or presence of 10 mM NaCl or 5 mM CaCl_2 . When the native PsbU protein was reconstituted together with the other three extrinsic proteins, the activity was recovered to 66%, 67% or 69%, respectively. This indicates that PsbU functions to optimize the availability of Ca^{2+} and Cl^- cofactors for water oxidation in the red algal PSII, in agreement with our previous results [6,8]. The recovery of oxygen-evolving activity by reconstitution with the PsbU mutant lacking one residue of the C-terminus (R1-Y92) was similar to that of reconstitution with native PsbU (R1-K93). In contrast, no recovery of oxygen-evolving activity was observed by reconstitution with the PsbU mutant lacking two residues of the C-terminus (R1-I91). These results clearly indicate that the second residue from the C-terminus of PsbU, Tyr-92, is important for its functioning in optimizing the availability of Ca^{2+} and Cl^- cofactors for water oxidation.

3.2. Aromatic structure of Tyr-92 in PsbU is essential for maintaining its functional structure

To determine which structure of Tyr-92 in PsbU is essential for maintaining its functioning, we constructed a series of mutants by replacing Tyr-92 with Thr (Y92T), Phe (Y92F), Asp (Y92D), Arg (Y92R), Ile (Y92I), Gly (Y92G), Trp (Y92W), Pro (Y92P) or His (Y92H). All of these mutants were able to rebound to the CaCl_2 -treated PSII retaining the other three extrinsic proteins completely (data not shown). This indicates that there are no effects on the binding ability of PsbU by replacing Tyr-92 with various amino acids, in agreement with the above results that even deletion of Tyr-92 did not affect its binding ability to PSII.

Table 2 shows the recovery of oxygen-evolving activity by rebinding of these PsbU mutants. No recovery was observed when the Y92T mutant was reconstituted together with the other three extrinsic proteins, indicating that the hydroxyl group of Tyr-92 in PsbU is not responsible for its functioning. In contrast, reconstitution with the Y92F mutant showed a high recovery of activity which was comparable with that of PSII reconstituted with the native PsbU protein. When Y92D, Y92R, Y92I or Y92G mutant was reconstituted, no recovery was observed. These results clearly indicate that the aromatic structure of Tyr-92 in PsbU is essential for maintaining its functional structure.

In order to determine whether heterocyclic amino acids or imino acid are able to function to maintain the functional structure of PsbU instead of aromatic amino acids, we examined the oxygen-evolving activity of PSII reconstituted with PsbU mutants with its Tyr-92 replaced by Trp (Y92W), Pro (Y92P) or His (Y92H). Although the reconstitution of Y92F recovered the oxygen-evolving activity as described above, no recovery was observed in CaCl_2 -treated PSII reconstituted with Y92W or Y92P (Table 2). In contrast, a partial recovery was obtained in the CaCl_2 -treated PSII reconstituted with Y92H, suggesting that the imidazole ring of His partially func-

Table 1

Oxygen evolution of the CaCl_2 -treated PSII reconstituted with native PsbU (R1-K93) or PsbU mutants lacking one (R1-Y92) or two residues (R1-I91) from C-terminus, together with the other three extrinsic proteins

	Oxygen evolution ($\mu\text{mol O}_2/\text{mg Chl/h}$)					
	–Ion	(%)	+10 mM NaCl	(%)	+5 mM CaCl_2	(%)
Untreated PSII	3095 ± 27	(100)	3144 ± 38	(100)	3190 ± 19	(100)
CaCl_2 -treated PSII	31 ± 5	(1)	37 ± 7	(1)	124 ± 26	(4)
+PsbO + PsbQ' + PsbV	82 ± 9	(3)	1124 ± 45	(36)	1576 ± 49	(49)
+PsbO + PsbQ' + PsbV + PsbU (R1-K93)	2051 ± 38	(66)	2091 ± 33	(67)	2186 ± 67	(69)
+PsbO + PsbQ' + PsbV + PsbU (R1-Y92)	1934 ± 69	(62)	1971 ± 84	(63)	2040 ± 70	(64)
+PsbO + PsbQ' + PsbV + PsbU (R1-I91)	87 ± 4	(3)	1103 ± 45	(35)	1567 ± 54	(49)

The values shown are means \pm standard error from three separate measurements.

Table 2

Oxygen evolution of the CaCl_2 -treated PSII reconstituted with native PsbU or PsbU mutants of Y92T, Y92F, Y92D, Y92R, Y92I, Y92G, or Y92F, Y92W, Y92P, Y92H, together with the other three extrinsic proteins

	Oxygen evolution ($\mu\text{mol O}_2/\text{mg Chl/h}$)					
	–Ion	(%)	+10 mM NaCl	(%)	+5 mM CaCl_2	(%)
Untreated PSII	3140 ± 28	(100)	3206 ± 12	(100)	3259 ± 39	(100)
CaCl_2 -treated PSII	35 ± 8	(1)	44 ± 9	(1)	190 ± 12	(6)
+PsbO + PsbQ' + PsbV	85 ± 20	(3)	1188 ± 81	(37)	1493 ± 78	(46)
+PsbO + PsbQ' + PsbV + native PsbU	2026 ± 42	(65)	2107 ± 49	(66)	2200 ± 86	(68)
+PsbO + PsbQ' + PsbV + PsbU (Y92T)	83 ± 20	(3)	1178 ± 63	(37)	1448 ± 80	(44)
+PsbO + PsbQ' + PsbV + PsbU (Y92F)	1884 ± 29	(60)	1959 ± 57	(61)	2032 ± 44	(62)
+PsbO + PsbQ' + PsbV + PsbU (Y92D)	82 ± 19	(3)	1209 ± 34	(38)	1537 ± 52	(47)
+PsbO + PsbQ' + PsbV + PsbU (Y92R)	76 ± 21	(2)	1198 ± 33	(37)	1470 ± 59	(45)
+PsbO + PsbQ' + PsbV + PsbU (Y92I)	80 ± 21	(3)	1246 ± 33	(39)	1504 ± 85	(46)
+PsbO + PsbQ' + PsbV + PsbU (Y92G)	90 ± 19	(3)	1199 ± 72	(37)	1515 ± 67	(46)
+PsbO + PsbQ' + PsbV + PsbU (Y92F)	1852 ± 47	(59)	1988 ± 39	(62)	2183 ± 49	(67)
+PsbO + PsbQ' + PsbV + PsbU (Y92W)	126 ± 8	(4)	1154 ± 51	(36)	1695 ± 38	(52)
+PsbO + PsbQ' + PsbV + PsbU (Y92P)	124 ± 10	(4)	1162 ± 74	(36)	1792 ± 84	(55)
+PsbO + PsbQ' + PsbV + PsbU (Y92H)	942 ± 18	(30)	1879 ± 52	(59)	2151 ± 39	(66)

The values shown are means \pm standard errors from three separate measurements.

tions to maintain the functional structure of PsbU instead of the aromatic ring of Tyr-92.

4. Discussion

In this study, we found that the aromatic structure of Tyr-92 in red algal PsbU is important for its functioning in optimizing the availability of Ca^{2+} and Cl^- cofactors for water oxidation. As described previously [8], the second amino acid from the C-terminus, Tyr, is completely conserved among all species including cyanobacteria, red algae and diatoms, supporting that this Tyr residue in PsbU is essential for its functioning among various species.

Recent crystallographic investigations of cyanobacterial PSII have provided medium-resolution structures (3.0–3.7 Å) that explain the general arrangement of the protein matrix and cofactors [10–12]. We examined the location of Tyr-92 of PsbU in the published 3.0 Å resolution structure of cyanobacterial PSII [10] and searched for the residues of intrinsic proteins that may interact with Tyr-92 of PsbU. As shown in Fig. 2, Tyr-103 of cyanobacterial PsbU, corresponding to Tyr-92 of the red algal PsbU, was located at a distance of 3.4 Å to Pro-340 of D1, suggesting a possible interaction between them. It has to be mentioned that there remains a possibility that the structure of red algal PSII is different from

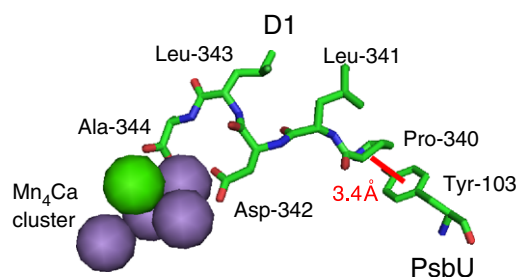


Fig. 2. Structure of the Mn_4Ca -cluster and the surrounding C-terminal residues of D1 together with Tyr-103 of cyanobacterial PsbU. The structure was drawn based on the published 3.0 Å resolution structure of cyanobacterial PSII (PDB ID: 2AXT). Tyr-103 of the cyanobacterial PsbU corresponding to Tyr-92 of red algal PsbU is located at a distance of 3.4 Å to Pro-340 of D1, suggesting their possible interaction. For clarity, only residues of D1 closely related to Pro-340 and the Mn_4Ca -cluster were shown.

that of cyanobacterial PSII, because an extra extrinsic protein, PsbQ', is present in red algal PSII but not in cyanobacterial PSII. Recent single particle image analysis, however, revealed that the location of PsbU in the red algal PSII from *C. caldarium* was similar to that of cyanobacterial PSII [13]. Furthermore, we have shown previously that the red algal PsbU protein can functionally bind to the cyanobacterial PSII from

Thermosynechococcus vulcanus [14]. These facts indicate that the overall structure of red algal PSII, at least with respect to the interaction of PsbU with PSII intrinsic proteins, is very similar to that of cyanobacterial PSII, except for the presence of PsbQ' in the former, but not in the latter, PSII.

It has been reported that interaction between CH groups of various compounds and the π -electron systems of aromatic amino acid residues (CH/ π interaction) plays an important role for maintaining functional structure of proteins, such as ligand-recognition function of carbohydrate-binding proteins [15], enzymatic activity of RNase [16], or recognition of DNA and RNA molecules by proteins [17]. The attraction and directionality of the CH/ π interaction were examined in the benzene–methane complex, and the interaction energy was estimated to be -1.45 kcal/mol and to have a minimum at 3.4 Å [18]. These results suggest also a CH/ π interaction between PsbU and D1, namely, the π -electron systems of the aromatic ring of Tyr-92 in red algal PsbU (Tyr-103 in cyanobacterial PsbU) interacts with the CH group of Pro-340 in D1.

Pro-340 of D1 is located in the C-terminal region of D1 where a number of residues are involved directly or indirectly in ligating the Mn_4Ca -cluster, including the two important C-terminal residues Asp-342 and Ala-344. Site-directed mutagenesis studies of these residues using a cyanobacterium *Synechocystis* sp. PCC 6803 have shown that Asp-342 modulated the calcium requirement of the water oxidation, and that the α -COO[−] group of Ala-344 was ligated to the Mn_4Ca -cluster [19,20]. Thus, it is likely that the proposed CH/ π interaction between Tyr-92 of PsbU and Pro-340 of D1 affected the structure of the C-terminal region of D1 required for maintaining the optimum structure of the Mn_4Ca -cluster in the absence of the Ca^{2+} and Cl^- cofactors.

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